competent authorities obtained. The Government does not approve of bureaucratic dominance and is committed to clear and implement new projects in a time-bound manner.

Internet Telephony

1847. SHRI K. C. KONDAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to provide the benefits of Internet Telephony to the customers from April 1, 2002;

(b) if so, how many customers would be benefited; and

(c) out of which, how many customers in Karnataka would be benefited?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) With opening of Internet Telephony, the customers are likely to be benefited with the availability of a cheaper option with less quality of voice transmission, for the long distance call. It is difficult to quantify the number of customers that would be benefited, at this point of time.

Reliance plan to destroy VSNL

1848. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI:
SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned 'how reliance plans to destroy VSNL with libralisation of telecom' as appeared in the Asian Age, New Delhi dated the 27th April, 2001;

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto;

(c) whether Government and CBI have initiated an inquiry into sharp upward movement in the entire dealing occurred by one Vice-President based at Mumbai of Reliance telecom; and

(d) if so, the findings thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Liberalisation of telecommunications sector is as per the New Telecom Policy of the Government. It is also found that continuation of VSNL's monopoly in international telephony has been posing a serious constraint on the telecom infrastructure in the country to facilitate IT based services. Advancing the termination of this monopoly is considered to be in the public interest. Therefore, Government decided to terminate it on 31.3.2002, advancing it by two years. Thus, international telephony will also be opened for other players in the field. TRAI has already given their recommendations for opening up the ILD sector and government has accepted the recommendation. All the eligible applicants can apply for licence to enter this sector, when the guidelines are notified. There is no evidence to prove the allegations in the news item. Therefore, Government has not approached CBI to initiate an inquiry in the matter.

Consumer Protection Act, 1986

1849. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently carried out major amendments to the Consumer Protection Act, 1986;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the impact of these amendments on the growth and strengthening of consumer movement in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) No, Sir. However, the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2001 to amend the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 mainly aimed at facilitating quicker disposal of consumer complaints, enhancing the capability of redressal agencies, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the